

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Hall has sent a letter, co-signed by 36 other members of Congress, asking President Obama to recommit publicly to the established withdrawal date of US Armed Forces from Iraq.

A Status of Forces agreement signed between President Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in November, 2008 established December 31st, 2011 as the date by which all American combat troops would be out of Iraq. But recent events in Iraq have caused some to doubt whether US troops can be withdrawn by that date.

An upswing in violence surrounding Iraq's Parliamentary Elections in March and the continuing uncertainty surrounding the elections stand as potential threats to US plans to withdraw and leave the safety and security of Iraq's future in Iraqi hands.

Congressman Hall's letter to President Obama makes it clear that the open-ended presence of US troops serves neither US nor Iraqi interests.

"The conflict and uncertainty over the March elections are indeed a setback and cause for concern," Congressman Hall writes in his letter to the President. "However, we must show the Iraqi people, and perhaps more importantly the Iraqi government, that America will not respond to every new or recurring problem by putting off our withdrawal date. The current challenges in Iraq make this the perfect time for the United States to prove to Iraqis we are willing to let them stand for themselves."

"This letter is an opportunity to remind President Obama that Congress wants our troops to come home on schedule," said Congressman Hall. "I am asking the President to strongly reaffirm that date, so we can finally put this ill-conceived war behind us."

Added Congressman Hall: "By 2011, US troops will have been deployed in Iraq for almost twice the length of World War II. Now that the finish line is finally in sight it is important to make it clear that Iraq must handle its own internal conflicts."

The full text of Congressman Hall's letter to the President is below.

June 9, 2010

Dear President Obama:

We are writing today to request that you reaffirm the timeline for withdrawing combat troops from Iraq established in the Status of Forces Agreement signed by President Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in November, 2008. Despite recent turmoil surrounding the results of Iraqi parliamentary elections in March, it is critical that the US live up to its commitment to withdraw all forces from Iraq by December 31st, 2011.

United States troops have been deployed in Iraq since March 2003, many serving multiple deployments that have been deeply challenging for them and their families. Nearly 4,400 American service members have been killed in the conflict and according to DOD figures nearly 32,000 have been wounded. Most Americans agree that the time has long since passed for our fighting men and women to come home from Iraq.

America's interests are not served by a prolonged, opened-ended commitment to maintaining forces in Iraq. The conflict and uncertainty over the March elections are indeed a setback and cause for concern. However, we must show the Iraqi people, and perhaps more importantly the Iraqi government, that America will not respond to every new or recurring problem by putting off our withdrawal date. The current challenges in Iraq make this the perfect time for the United States to prove to Iraqis we are willing to let them stand for themselves.

American forces deployed in Iraq have suffered greatly and many continue to suffer after they have returned home to their families. They served with courage and skill, and our nation owes them a tremendous debt. We honor their sacrifice by remaining firm and meeting our goal of allowing the Iraqi people to be independent and self-sufficient.

Please assure us of your intention to honor the November 2008 Status of Forces agreement and commit to withdrawing American troops by the end of 2011. Thank you for your dedicated efforts to keep our country safe.